

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Statement of Assistant Secretary Christopher R. Hill
“The Six-Party Talks and the North Korean Nuclear Issue”
October 6, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to review with the Committee the important results from the Six-Party Talks in Beijing two weeks ago, and the way forward. Ambassador Joseph DeTrani, U. S. Special Envoy for Six-Party Talks, is appearing with me today, and while Ambassador DeTrani does not have a statement, he will be happy to respond to questions from the Committee.

The key outcome of the last round of Six-Party talks is clear, unambiguous, and endorsed by all Six Parties to the talks: It is the DPRK commitment to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and to return, at an early date, to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards.

The September 19 Joint Statement is a statement of principles designed to guide the parties on the way forward. It gives a vision of the end-point of the process – from the DPRK, prompt and verifiable denuclearization; from the other parties, economic cooperation, energy assistance, and steps toward normalization of relations, provided that matters of bilateral concern such as human rights are addressed.

The DPRK’s agreement to abandon all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs is a critical step toward a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, and toward a more stable and secure Northeast Asia. The next phase, working out the details of the DPRK’s denuclearization as well as corresponding measures the other parties will take, will involve tough negotiations. The DPRK’s nuclear weapons and programs threaten peace and stability in the Northeast Asian region and beyond, as well as global nonproliferation regime. We believe that the Six-Party Talks are the best means of dealing with this threat. We are beginning to see results. But the time has come to move from declarations to real action. The parties agreed to hold the fifth round of Talks in Beijing in November, where the next step is to discuss a process and timetable for denuclearization.

In my remarks today, Mr. Chairman, I'll give a sense of the dynamic of the talks earlier this month in Beijing, elaborate on the elements of the agreement reached, and sketch out where we will go from here.

The Beijing Talks

We held intensive discussions July 26 through August 7, recessing so delegations could consult with capitals and reconvening September 13 through 19. The six parties met together in plenary or smaller session most days, sometimes multiple times a day. We met with our allies, Japan and the Republic of Korea, daily. We met nearly every day with the Chinese delegation and the DPRK delegation, and most days as well with the Russian delegation.

All the delegations were serious and well-prepared, and the atmosphere was business-like. There was very little in the way of polemics. Discussions were to the point and focused on getting agreement on a package of elements for a joint statement that would bring us to the implementation phase.

I want to make special note of the important role China played in this round of Talks. China was a full participant. It also chaired the Talks. It pursued its national interests, but the Chinese delegation also acted as a kind of Secretariat, extracting from the positions put forward by all the parties elements that could be combined to form the basis of a joint statement. China circulated five drafts of the joint agreement during the fourth round, and I must say the Chinese drafting was deft. I don't think any of the parties were completely satisfied with the final product; that is the way with consensus documents, on which all parties have to make compromises. Still, the document allows us to get to the implementation phase as quickly as possible, and to move closer to the goal of denuclearization.

Elements of the Joint Statement

I'll now discuss the specific text of the Joint Statement.

For the first time, the DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards. The new DPRK commitment is broader in scope than was the

case under the Agreed Framework, under which the DPRK agreed to cease a series of defined nuclear activities at specific facilities. While North Korea did freeze its graphite-moderated reactor programs, it subsequently violated the Agreed Framework and the 1992 inter-Korean joint declaration on denuclearizing the Peninsula by pursuing a clandestine uranium enrichment program. Although the DPRK's new pledge to dismantle is unambiguous, the proof of its intent will of course be in the nature of its declaration of nuclear weapons and programs, and then in the speed with which it abandons them.

In my closing statement at the talks, Mr. Chairman, I specified that the DPRK must comprehensively declare, and then completely, verifiably and irreversibly eliminate, all elements of its past and present nuclear programs – plutonium and uranium – and all of its nuclear weapons, and not reconstitute those programs in the future. I made clear that to return to the NPT and come into full compliance with IAEA safeguards, the DPRK would, among other things, need to cooperate on all steps deemed necessary to verify the correctness and completeness of its declarations of nuclear materials and activities. My counterparts from all the other parties to the Six-Party Talks stipulated in their own closing remarks that the signal achievement of the fourth round was the DPRK's commitment to undertake full denuclearization. All my counterparts stressed that it was incumbent on the DPRK to abandon its nuclear status, return to the NPT and abide by IAEA safeguards.

There has been much comment on the DPRK's future right to a civilian nuclear program. The DPRK, in the Joint Statement, asserted that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties took note of this assertion and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of a light water reactor to the DPRK.

We have been crystal clear with respect to when the “appropriate time” would be to discuss with the DPRK provision of a light water reactor. The U.S. will only support such a discussion:

- after the DPRK had promptly eliminated all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs, and this had been verified to the satisfaction of all parties by credible international means, including the IAEA; and

- after the DPRK had come into full compliance with the NPT and IAEA safeguards, had demonstrated a sustained commitment to cooperation and transparency, and had ceased proliferating nuclear technology.

The Korean, Japanese, Russian and Chinese delegations made statements in this regard, each specifying that they would handle any energy cooperation with DPRK in strict accordance with rights and obligations under the NPT and IAEA safeguards. None of them expressed a willingness to provide the DPRK with an LWR, understanding that the DPRK's legitimate energy needs are best met through other means. The DPRK Foreign Ministry, in a September 20 press statement, said the DPRK would return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards only after it received a light water reactor from the United States. The September 20 assertion is inconsistent with the language in the Joint Statement and at odds with statements made by all of the other parties. Subsequent DPRK comments appear to modify the September 20 demand, but do not provide the clarity that we need. I will note again that none of the other parties expressed a willingness to provide the DPRK with an LWR.

In my closing statement in Beijing, I noted that the NPT recognized that Treaty parties could pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the context of compliance with Articles I and II of the Treaty. Foremost among the Treaty's obligations for all but the five nuclear-weapons states is the commitment not to possess or pursue nuclear weapons. The Treaty also calls for its parties to adhere to safeguards agreements with the IAEA. Thus, the DPRK's statement concerning its "right" to peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be premised on the verifiable elimination of all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs as well as the nation's coming into full compliance with the NPT and IAEA safeguards.

I also noted in my statement that the United States supported a decision by the end of this year to terminate KEDO and its light-water reactor project. We believe that KEDO as an organization has served its purpose and that now we need new, more secure, arrangements to carry out denuclearization.

As the DPRK takes steps to denuclearize, the other parties have agreed to a number of corresponding measures. In the Joint Statement, the U.S. affirmed that we have no nuclear weapons on the territory of the ROK

and that we have no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons. But we do continue to worry about the large conventional forces the DPRK maintains. Let me underscore that the U.S. remains committed to our alliance with the ROK, and has no plan to withdraw additional troops from the Peninsula.

The Joint Statement specifies in the context of denuclearization, the U.S. and the DPRK will take steps to normalize bilateral relations, subject to bilateral policies. In my statement, I made clear the United States desires to normalize relations subject to resolution of our longstanding concerns. By this I meant that as a necessary part of the process leading to normalization, we must discuss important issues including human rights, biological and chemical weapons, ballistic missile programs, proliferation of conventional weapons, terrorism and other illicit activities. I left no doubt that if the DPRK wished to return to the international community, it would have to commit to international standards across the board, and then prove its intentions.

In the Joint Statement, the U.S. and its partners agreed to identify means of addressing the DPRK's energy needs. The ROK reaffirmed its proposal of July 12, 2005 concerning the provision of 2 million kilowatts of electric power to the DPRK. The proposal provides an expedited and non-nuclear solution to the DPRK's urgent need for energy, opening the way for economic modernization and development. The United States is considering how it might participate in provision of energy assistance. We are also thinking about how we might assist with retraining the DPRK's nuclear scientists and workers.

Throughout the talks we appreciated the close cooperation and steadfast support of our Japanese and ROK allies. Our trilateral consultations allowed us to achieve progress. We were pleased to see that the GOJ and DPRK in the Joint Statement said that they would undertake to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of settlement of the unfortunate past and outstanding issues of concern. Japan's delegate, in his closing statement, made clear that those issues included missiles and abductions; the U.S. supports this position.

When implemented, the total package of the undertakings in the Joint Statement will advance the U.S. national interest by denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. The package is aimed at eliciting North Korean actions

that will enhance the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime. If implemented, it will provide new opportunities for growth and stability in East Asia, and a new and better future for the North Korean people.

Next Steps

The parties agreed to hold the Fifth Round of Six-Party Talks in Beijing in early November. We are preparing for those meetings now. The next step will be to have discussions on key elements of the Joint Statement, especially regarding DPRK actions to declare and dismantle its nuclear weapons program, and actions that the international community will take to verify that dismantlement. We will also begin to consider economic cooperation, energy assistance and a normalization process. We will be drawing up time-lines and sequencing of actions. Through diplomatic channels, we are in touch with the other parties.

As we implement key elements of the Joint Statement, we will continue to take steps to protect ourselves and our allies from North Korea's proliferation and illicit activities. We have recently strengthened the Proliferation Security Initiative, consulted with key partners on DPRK conventional arms sales, and taken action under Section 311 of the Patriot Act against a bank in Macau used by the North Koreans for money laundering.

The way forward is to build on the agreement that we reached last month in Beijing. The issues are complex and interrelated, and negotiations will be difficult. But I believe that each of the parties recognizes that the realization of the vision laid out in the September 19 Joint Statement is in its fundamental interest. This provides a firm basis on which to proceed. We will continue to work closely with the Committee as we do so.